

Meeting Notes

Interior Museum Property Committee Meeting

8:30 AM -- 2:30 PM, Tuesday, November 7, 2006; Room 2603A, 1849 C Street, NW

The next meeting will be scheduled when events warrant. Meanwhile, work of the Interior Museum Property Committee (IMPC) will continue through subordinate working groups and through e-mail and telephonic communications.

These notes were prepared following review by meeting participants. IMPC meeting notes are posted on the Interior Museum Program (IMP) web pages at this URL <http://museums.doi.gov/imp.html>.

Ron Wilson opened the November 7 meeting at 8:30 a.m. with introductions. Meeting participants are listed below.

BIA	no representative		
BLM	Emily S. Palus	202-452-7721	emily_palus@blm.gov
FWS	Eugene Marino	703-358-2173	eugene.marino@fws.gov
IACB	Kenneth Van Wey	202-208-3773	kenneth_van_vey@ios.doi.gov
MMS	Tracy Helmick	703-787-1140	tracy.helmick@mms.gov
NPS	Lynn Black	202-354-2002	lynn_black@nps.gov
	Terry Childs	202-354-2125	terry_childs@nps.gov
	Ann Hitchcock	202-354-2271	ann_hitchcock@nps.gov
OS/NBC	Kim Robinson	202-208-1169	kim_d_robinson@nbc.gov
OS/PAM	Donald R. Cumberland	304-263-4196	donaldcumberland@hotmail.com
	Ronald C. Wilson	202-208-3438	rowilson@os.doi.gov
OS/PFM	no representative		
OS/PPP	no representative		
OS/OST	David Pradt	505-816-1084	dpradt@yahoo.com
Reclamation	Tom Lincoln	303-445-3311	tlincoln@do.usbr.gov
USGS	Joanna Bloch (on phone)	703-648-7326	jcampagna@usgs.gov

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Interior Museum Program Operations Manager **Donald R. Cumberland** will retire at the end of the week, with his last day in the office being November 9, 2006. The group thanked Donald for his substantial contributions to improving the management of federal museum collections during his 31 years of federal service. The request for personnel action to backfill the vacancy is currently in the Human Resources Office. When available, the vacancy announcement will be distributed to IMPC representatives with a request that they assist with recruiting qualified applicants.

The Museum Program will have a booth at the American Association of Museums annual meeting in Chicago, May 13-17, 2007. Plan now to provide any handouts you want to distribute there to IMP staff in April 2007.

PROJECT UPDATES

Interior Museum Program Training and Technical Assistance

Donald Cumberland reported on FY2006 training and technical assistance:

Managing Museum Property – March Session

This 36-hour course was conducted in Tallahassee, FL on March 13-17, 2006 as a collaborative effort with the NPS Southeast Archeological Center. It was hosted by the USGS. 23 participants received training.

Curating Natural History Collection

A successful 36-hour Curating Natural History Collections course was conducted April 3-7, 2006 in partnership with the NPS Park Museum Management Program and the Smithsonian Institution National Museum of Natural History. 34 participants received training.

Managing Museum Property – July-August Session

This 36-hour course was conducted in St. Louis on July 31- August 4, 2006 in collaboration with the NPS Jefferson National Expansion Memorial and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Mandatory Center of Expertise for the Curation and Management of Archeological Collections. The class received the highest participant satisfaction ratings of any course conducted by the IMP. 24 participants received training.

Update on Distance Learning Module, Web Based Training “Introduction to Managing Museum Property”

This approximately 30-45 minute module will be administered by DOI University. The IMP Training Committee is still in the process of reviewing a draft of text submitted by DOI University. Once we finalize text DOI University will match graphics to text and the Committee will then review that effort. Completion of the module was expected this fiscal year, but was put on hold to focus on classroom training. Reconciling DOI U comments with IMP Training Committee recommendations became more complicated than anticipated.

Technical Assistance or Planning Site Visits

NPS Russell Cave National Monument and Little River Canyon National Preserve

IMP staff served on a collection management planning team for the NPS and contributed to Collections Management Plans for these sites. A Collection Storage Plan was also produced for these units.

Homestead National Monument of America

IMP staff produced a Collection Storage Plan for this site.

Funds for Museum Equipment and Supplies

\$34,000 in IMP funds remaining after training projects were transferred to the National Park Service, Indian Arts and Crafts Board, and Bureau of Land Management for the purchase of museum equipment and supplies

FY2006 ANNUAL REPORTS

Inconsistency

Ron Wilson opened the discussion of FY2006 annual reports by noting inconsistency among the numbers submitted to the Departmental Office of Acquisition and Property Management (PAM), Office of Financial Management (PFM), and Office of Planning and Performance Management (PPP). PAM collects the most specific unit-level data on bureau units and “other” (non-bureau) units, PFM collects more general collection data on bureau units and “non-federal” units, and PPP collects condition data on collections defined by administrative oversight of the collections rather than by strict physical sites. All approaches are valid, but require care to keep the data straight.

Bureau representatives summarized their experiences with the reports and with auditors. For most bureaus, the annual reports are becoming routine. BIA, BLM, BOR, and FWS are still struggling to obtain accurate data on bureau collections housed in non-federal partner institutions. The increased audit attention prompted several bureaus to clean up their repository lists by removing institutions for which they lack documentation. Staff and funding constraints continue to impede the process of working with repositories to ensure care of federal collections housed there.

Audit Experiences

Bureau representatives noted that audit approaches varied significantly among bureaus, and that auditors asked several bureaus about data not included in the PFM reports. Auditors continue to raise issues that reflect their lack of knowledge rather than valid concerns regarding accountability for the collections. They continue to use incorrect and/or outdated process memoranda that result in inappropriate questions and activities.

Strategies

There is a need to develop strategies to update all condition data at least every five years. The self-certification exercise we completed this year bought some time, but does not substitute for condition assessments by Interior staffs. We need to focus more time and resources on working with repository staffs and on developing formal curation agreements that include periodic condition assessments as one of the deliverables.

It was suggested that PAM send a memo to bureaus encouraging them to give priority to completing base-line condition data and to establish a cycle that would ensure that no condition data becomes more than five years out of date. Ron agreed to consider this, perhaps as part of the memo distributing the FY2006 Department-wide Museum Property Management Summary Report.

The group discussed whether or not there is a need to better distinguish between precise data and estimates of collection size. It was decided to keep the current approach of reporting totals without distinguishing between which data are precise or estimates.

CORE MANDATES

Ron Wilson suggested that bureaus consider their museum program activities in the context of key mandates that outline agency responsibilities for managing federal museum collections. A partial list of these mandates includes:

- A. Trust duty of CARE:** Requires reasonably prudent preservation, protection, and increase of collection assets.
- B. Trust duty of LOYALTY:** Requires that we administer the collection assets solely in the interest of the beneficiaries for whom we hold it in trust, the American Public.
- C. Trust duty of OBEDIENCE:** Requires that we administer the collection assets according to applicable statutes.
- D. Trust limitation of DELEGATION:** Requires that key decisions affecting the collection assets must be made by agency representatives with knowledge of museum ethics and practice.
- E. 5 CFR 2635:** Employees shall protect and conserve Federal property. [note that there is no exclusion for museum collections]
- F. 36 CFR 79:** Federal agencies must evaluate pre-existing collections & repositories, eliminate inadequate care, and use repositories that meet standards.
- G. Statement of Federal Financial Accounting Standards (SFFAS) #29:** Heritage Assets (including museum collections) are expected to be preserved indefinitely.
- H. Part 411 Departmental Manual:** Department of the Interior Bureaus and Offices must establish and fund a viable museum program consistent with departmental policies & procedures.

TROUBLING TRENDS

Ron Wilson noted that several bureaus reported reducing staff, funding, or both. Since most bureau programs are already under funded and under staffed, these cuts increase the risks of loss or damage to the collections and impact bureau abilities to provide services. They also impact bureau abilities to provide accurate data for the annual reports, risking adverse audit consequences.

Ron expressed concern with Reclamation's unauthorized "withdrawal" of nearly six million collection items from 85 "collections". He was also concerned that Reclamation did not comply with PAM's instruction to restore the withdrawn collections in the final, fourth quarter report. PAM had not received a response to its September 6, 2006 memorandum to Reclamation at the time of this meeting. (Reclamation's response was received on November 20, 2006.)

Tom Lincoln reported that Reclamation's approach helped to get some recalcitrant regions to provide funds to get some of the withdrawn collections accessioned and catalogued. He stated that Reclamation does not believe these items can be legally claimed as museum property until such time as an official accession report has been

created. He also noted that the removed collections are all to be accessioned, and that the current schedule is for this activity to be completed by the end of fiscal year 2008.

Ron responded by stating that Interior has accepted the “best available” data since the initial department-wide survey of collections in 1991, data that includes both precise data and data on many collections that are not fully documented. A documentation backlog should not be used to justify taking the collections off the books. Creating the documentation cited by Tom (an official accession report) is not a time-consuming process and has been required by departmental standards since January 8, 1993. That Reclamation has postponed the process for 13 years is not consistent with departmental objectives stated in 411DM and does not justify withdrawing the collections from annual reports.

Ron expressed continuing concern regarding lack of support of three Indian Arts and Crafts Board museums, and by the Department’s lack of response to House and Senate Appropriations Committees instructing continued support of the museums.

Ron distributed a copy of the latest PPP template on collections. It includes the following updated definitions:

Collections: include assemblages of objects, works of art, and/or historic documents, representing archeology, art, ethnography, biology, geology, paleontology, and history, collected according to a rational scheme and maintained so they can be preserved, studied, and interpreted for public benefit. A collection includes cataloged and/or uncataloged objects under the control of an administrative unit/location, which may have multiple facilities/spaces that house the collection. [Adapted from 411DM1]

DOI Inventory for Collections: All museum property identified as owned or controlled by DOI bureaus. This includes museum property that is accessioned and/or unaccessioned, cataloged and/or uncataloged, and may be managed in bureau or non-bureau facilities.

Accessioned: The process by which the DOI formally accepts and establishes permanently legal title (ownership) and/or custody for a museum object or group of museum objects. A single accession transaction occurs when one or more objects are acquired in the same manner from one source at one time for the museum property collection.

Ron asked BIA, BLM, FWS, and NPS representatives to update bureau contact data on the PPP form.

INTERIOR MUSEUM COLLECTIONS MANAGEMENT SYSTEM (ICMS) UPDATE

ICMS Project Manager Lynn Black reported that she has received bureau-specific needs of all bureaus except one. The final submission is expected shortly. She expects to have

a Statement of Work document in the contracting office in December 2006. She expects to have ICMS staff working with individual bureaus by February 2007. An initial training session on ICMS is scheduled for August 21-23, 2007 at the National Conservation Training Center (NCTC) in Shepherdstown, West Virginia.

She noted that version 8.0 of the NPS system has been well received. It includes many of the features that will be incorporated into ICMS.

UNIT-LEVEL PLANNING DOCUMENTS

Ron Wilson expressed continuing concern with the slow pace of unit-level planning documents in most bureaus. These documents, required by 411DM2.1B, are needed to inform annual reports on deferred maintenance, asset business plans, and asset management plans. It was noted that the long checklist in the DOI Museum Property Handbook, Volume I, Appendix E (at <http://www.doi.gov/museum/policy/pdf/mphi-e.pdf>) includes a section on facility conditions. The group recommended that we should stop reporting on “deferred maintenance” in “other” facilities. Ron agreed.

Ann Hitchcock suggested that we coordinate with the Office of Environmental Policy and Compliance (OEPC) regarding requirements for Environmental Safeguards Plans and Emergency Management Plans. We need to ensure that museum collections are included in the plans. See http://www.doi.gov/oepec/NCH_SOP.doc for Standard Operating Procedures for National Response Plan Activations for Emergency Support Function #11, Natural and Cultural Resources and Historic Properties Protection. The Department of the Interior has an interagency agreement with FEMA to continue natural and cultural resources recovery efforts under ESF #11 for hurricanes Katrina, Rita, and Wilma. Costs including base salaries are reimbursable. Interior is currently conducting a GAP analysis on Environmental Safeguards Plans. We need to determine how many museum collection Emergency Management Plans (see 411DM2.1B(3)) are done and how many are left to do.

IMP PRIORITIES FOR FY2007

There was a discussion of activities the IMPC would like Interior Museum Staff to do. Ron noted that how many can be done will depend in part on when we get an appropriation for FY2007, and on IMP staffing – how long it takes to backfill the vacancy left by Donald Cumberland’s retirement, and the availability of interns to assist.

1st Tier Issues and Projects

- **Complete** and **implement** online training course “Introduction to Managing Museum Property”
- **Oversight** and **follow-up** of museum property reporting, management control, and audits
- **Oversight** and **development** of the department-wide museum management software program - Interior Collection Management System (ICMS)
- **Announce** IMP staff vacancy, **recruit** applicants, and **fill** vacancy

- **Provide** training to DOI staff to adequately manage museum property, including a 36-hour Managing Museum Property class in Tucson in the spring of 2007
- **Develop** briefing materials for managers, perhaps in the context of refining information that will be needed for transition briefing materials in 2008. It was noted that we have multiple audiences and we need to tailor briefing materials specific to each. Subgroups from the IMPC could focus on individual audiences.
- **Advise** and **assist** bureau staffs and departmental managers on museum property management requirements and techniques
- **Follow-up** on bureau implementation of Contaminated Collections guidance, and ensure that this requirement is incorporated into ICMS

2nd Tier Issues and Projects (Things we should accomplish but are secondary to the first tier):

- **Coordinate** Interagency Federal Collections Alliance
- **Prepare** a briefing on federal museum issues for the Federal Preservation Institute
- **Compile** a set of various discipline-specific codes of ethics for IMPC use and for sharing with the Office of the Solicitor
- **Host** an IFCA briefing for DC-area agencies
- **Draft** a Strategy for Federal Museum Collections modeled after the Strategy for Federal Archeology that was signed by the Secretary a few years ago.
- **Conduct** bureau site visits upon request to mitigate museum management issues and provide planning assistance
- **Oversight** of department-wide Heritage Assets Partnership to integrate heritage assets into the department's Asset Management Plan

BUREAU MUSEUM PROGRAM UPDATES

Bureau of Indian Affairs

Emily Palus reported that she has left BIA. Donald Sutherland is the interim contact until her position is back-filled. The position may be assigned other duties and upgraded to GS 13/14.

Bureau of Land Management

Emily Palus reported that she is the new National Curator for BLM. She will work on building the BLM museum program by developing revised policy documents, a bureau collections management plan, closing an OIG audit from 1999, and working on agreements with repositories that house BLM collections.

Bureau of Reclamation

Tom Lincoln reported that Reclamation's museum policy statement is in final stages for its 2nd formal review; he hopes to have it completed by March 2007. Reclamation offered

the job vacated by Myra Giesen to an applicant, but it was not accepted. The bureau now plans to restructure the position as a two-year internship that can be converted to permanent status if all works out.

Fish and Wildlife Service

Eugene Marino reported that FWS has established a small (\$300,000) grant program funded through the FWS Foundation.

He noted that information from the recent Preserve America Summit are posted at http://www.preserveamericasummit.org/pa/hay_reg_index.asp?page=1022

Indian Arts and Crafts Board (IACB)

Ken Van Wey reported the IACB continues its NAGPRA compliance activities. Press and Congressional interest continues in the Department's plans for the three IACB museums.

National Business Center

Kim Robinson reported on current exhibits at the Interior Museum, including Edward Curtis prints on loan from BIA and a new exhibit on Apache shirts.

National Park Service

Ann Hitchcock reported that current NPS service-wide initiatives include (*new items since last report in italics*):

- Establishing significance criteria
- Integrating museum management and the incident command system— *DOI has an Interagency Agreement with FEMA and Reimbursable Support Agreements with bureaus to provide recovery assistance for Hurricanes Katrina, Rita, and Wilma.* NPS continues work on its Environmental Safeguards Plan.
- Continuing project to extend the longevity of NPS film-based collections (Fee Program Funding). Assessed the need in parks.
- Continuing project to prepare high quality digital images of significant objects in NPS museum collections and post the images on the web greatly expanding web access to park catalog data and images (Fee Program funding)
- Completing a Congressionally mandated service-wide storage strategy
- Developing service-wide repository agreements and maintaining an agreement with American Type Culture Collection to serve as repository for biological collections in cryogenic storage.
- Renewing policy, DO#24 NPS Museum Collections.
- Completing a service-wide management review of implementation of deaccessioning and annual inventory procedures in parks
- Maintaining Museum Management Program web site with 19 web exhibits and 6 lesson plans—*posted new web exhibit featuring collections from John Muir National Historic Site and new Teaching with Museum Collections lesson plan featuring Nez Perce National Historical Park.*
- Maintaining the Web Catalog—collections from 23 parks featured.
- Coordinating development of Interior Collections Management System

- *Opened exhibit on the Antiquities Act Centennial in cooperation with the DOI Museum in May. For more information on the centennial, see <http://www.cr.nps.gov/archeology/sites/antiquities/index.htm>.*
- *NPS Museum Management Program Council meets in Washington, DC, Nov. 14-16, 2006.*
- *Issued revisions to NPS Museum Handbook, including a new Code of Ethics.*

Office of Special Trustee for American Indians

U.S. Geological Survey

- Joanna Campagna reported that she has completed a couple of exhibits.